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The United States vs. 3 Cases of Canned Salmon

ALMOST everyone knows that there is a Food and Drug Administration in Washington which has something to do with protection of citizens against adulterated and misbranded foods and drugs; many have heard of departments which exist in some states for a similar purpose. Under the American constitution, designed for a less complex and less interdependent society than the United States of today, the control of food and drugs is not within the power of the national government except in so far as products are shipped *across state lines* or into the District of Columbia or a territory. On this account the federal government exercises its control only over a limited proportion of the products produced, and that under difficult circumstances requiring the interception of a shipment which can be proved to have passed in interstate commerce.

The federal food and drug control is a branch of the Department of Agriculture, whose main pur-

pose, always emphasized by its officials, has been the fostering of agriculture and the increase of income of farmers. While the fostering of husbandry is on the whole an entirely commendable activity for the federal government, there are numerous points where operation on this basis conflicts with the interest of the general public as consumers, and of course even of the farming population itself as consumers.

Before and around the year 1906, Congress and many of the state legislatures attempted to pass legislation which would result in effective control of the food and drug supply, but most of the results of the widespread disclosures of adulteration which culminated in attempts in 1906 to control the situation by law have been frittered away in the past twenty years.

The collapse of control activity is a result of the progressive weakening of official activity and concern for the public health through the pressure of

commercial forces in close touch and constant communication with food and drug administrators, municipal, state, and national. The framework of legislation, moreover, has become increasingly inadequate as a basis for official control activities because of rapid changes and complications in industrial processes in handling, packing, "refining," canning, preserving, transporting, etc. of foods and drugs. An additional and totally unexpected source of weakness in the consumer's defenses has come to exist in a body of court decisions which have almost uniformly gone against the consumer's right to the protection of his health and his economic interests, and against even the ordinary ideas of trade ethics condemning adulteration, dishonest labeling, etc.—principles which gave promise of being strengthened and consolidated in 1906 when the laws were passed.

The whole question is one of the greatest public importance, but unfortunately for the consumer it is also technically ramified and exceedingly complex; it is thus no longer capable of being discussed in the simple and sensational terms which gave the great public interest to the exposures by Upton Sinclair, Samuel Hopkins Adams and others in the years preceding 1906.

Effective enforcement of the law is vitally dependent upon precise and tightly worded definitions of food products, adulterants, etc.; but the law in 26 years has never been modified either to write the needed definitions into the laws themselves, or (except for canned foods) to give to officially established definitions the weight of law before the courts. Piled upon these weighty difficulties lies the fact that the Food and Drug Administration has preferred to issue misleading and Pollyanna statements of the effectiveness of its activities, for which purpose it has employed shrewd tricksters (posing as scientific experts) as publicity agents and writers of magazine articles. Worse still, the administration follows a course of dealing secretly and tenderly with clear violations of the Food and Drugs act, and has refrained, until grumbling by consumers was heard increasingly in the past year or two, from calling public attention to the manifest weaknesses in the act which make it hopelessly ineffective in view of the Administration's own lack of skill, staff, or wish to enforce it.

It is far less expensive to a corporation to be found guilty of an offense against the Food and Drugs act than it is to violate the Insecticide, or the Rosin and Turpentine (so-called Naval Stores) acts; both of the latter classes of offenses are treated far more severely by the courts, since they have a commercial rather than a hygienic significance, and since adulteration or false grading of Paris green or rosin *causes a loss of money or profits to businessmen or agriculturists, rather than a loss of value or of health to mere consumers*. The embarrassment of jailing or penalizing by fines the responsible officers of important corporations, as the

law provides, is avoided by the Food and Drug Administration by bringing charges *in rem*, as the lawyers say—that is, against the goods themselves. Thus we have the ridiculous form of suit: "The United States vs. 3 Cases of Canned Salmon." If the government "wins," the 3 cases of salmon are confiscated and destroyed, or returned to the offender under bond for reconditioning (by separating the putrid fish from the good); usually, it appears, with no adequate provision to insure that the reconditioning is really honestly or competently done. If the government loses, the 3 cases of tinned fish are returned to their owner to slide back quietly into the channels of interstate trade.

In the federal control as actually administered, jail sentences do not occur, and even fines of \$100 or more are almost unknown. In local food and drug administration, penalties are limited almost entirely to offenses involving grossly filthy or criminally negligent conditions of a sort that are shockingly evident to the senses of sight or smell of even ordinary consumers.

A watchful trade magazine reports that "officials of the Department of Agriculture . . . have not wanted to burden the business interests of the country unduly with prosecutions, regulations, restrictions, and what not, during the economic depression . . . [and there] has been a reduction of such government interference."

Both state and federal administrations have adopted a policy of suppressing their findings with respect to the degree of contamination, filthiness, or poisonous adulteration involved in the case before the court, and particularly the names of firms proceeded against. Newspapers and magazines have in the past 20 years consistently prevented news of important food and drug hazards from reaching public knowledge, except in cases of such magnitude or wide recognition that attempts at suppression would have been futile.

As has been noted, the control of food and drugs under the American theory of government is assumed by the federal administration only with respect to interstate commerce. State and municipal laws are supposed to take care of goods which do not pass across state lines, or which may—as in 99% of cases they do—elude one of the 65 federal inspectors available for food and drug control work in the U. S. and its territories and dependencies.

Undoubtedly most serious food and drug poisoning cases (and there are thousands of these, some of them involving 50 or 100 people at a time, and one as many as 15,000) have been due to the negligence of federal control officers, and even more to the laissez-faire policy (with respect to business practices) of the administrations until recently behind them. A further large number is due to the practical absence of food and drug control in the states and municipalities. In the space available the situation can be indicated only very briefly. Arkansas, Mississippi, Minnesota, Indiana, North and South Ca-

rolina and West Virginia, and possibly some other states, either have no person or department responsible for overseeing the food and/or drug supply of their respective states, or provide no funds by which the work could be carried on. The limited inspection that is done in most of the states—and few do anything worthy to be called a competent or scientific job—relies entirely upon such obvious and rudimentary examinations as can designate a carload of bulk fish as putrid, or a beef carcass as fly-blown; but even on this simple type of observation there will be many cases that will in practice be resolved in favor of the seller instead of the buyer, because the seller is on the job to defend his rights, and because public officials—who are generally speaking, under political domination—are extremely sensitive to businessmen's interests. The state and city services with a few honorable exceptions are staffed with political sinecurists—men of no scientific or even legal training or experience. Some have even been appointed because their principal qualification was that they had a motorcycle to get about with, or because they had once run a dairy farm.

The pressure brought to bear upon state officials is enormous, and weakly resisted, if at all, because the officials are rarely qualified by scientific training or by ordinary determination to perform their jobs well in the face of constant pressure from active and well paid emissaries with legal or technical knowledge. A visit from a shrewd lawyer or political agent of a manufacturer whose business has been interfered with, or a dignified letter from a friendly college professor who sees things in a business-like way, puts everything right again for the offending firm. Court cases are rarely brought, because the manufacturer's or dealer's attorneys find it easy to make the administrators, city and state, appear professionally and technically unqualified, and legally unprepared to meet unexpected tactics or surprise testimony of "experts" readily hired to testify to almost any claim the defense may need to establish. A college-professor expert was found to testify that when flies and cockroaches which had been killed with poison bait were then bottled in soda water the resulting drink was harmless; that even poisonous spiders and scorpions embalmed in a soft drink could be swallowed with impunity; and packers of decomposed canned salmon alleged that since there was no formal *proof* that decomposed salmon was harmful to the consumer's health, no prosecutions should stand against them under the Food and Drugs act.

The states' activities and legal protections have been further weakened by the pressure which the federal officers have exerted by legal and non-legal means, to keep any state law or regulation from being more severe or restrictive than the national Food and Drugs act, as the continuance of any such difference in effectiveness would imply a clear reflection on the competence of federal regulation, and would be bound in time to cause questions to be asked in Congress, and its committees. Food and drug protection is tangled up badly with other activities of the departments of agriculture in some states, and everywhere commercial interests are more likely to be safeguarded than is the consum-

er's interest in foods and medicines. Some of the state departments indeed have become largely promotional agencies for agricultural products, as, for example, the Department of Agriculture in South Carolina, which has aggressively "investigated" and given publicity to South Carolina canned foods containing iodine, and the Department in California which with all the high pressure tactics of a chamber of commerce, pushes the sale of California-grown fruits. It is not that the states' promotion of agriculture is objectionable; but the mixing of such promotional work with the purely technical problem of food and drug control cannot help but be to the disadvantage of the consumer.

Several states do a really competent job within the limits of their means and the public support given; for example, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, North Dakota, and Connecticut (perhaps one should add Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and New York). In some states a very good job is done under one type of governor—and none at all or a very poor one, under a more business-minded state executive.

The control of drugs is at a much worse level than that of foods, since the problems are technically more complex and laborious, and the consumer less likely to learn that he has been injured or outdone, and since an inspector's sight or sense of smell is of little use in determining even the simplest matters. Moreover, the laws covering adulteration frequently were written in such incompetent or negligent or lobby-controlled fashion as not to give drug commissioners even the right to interfere with weak, over-potent or adulterated drugs. Further it may be safely said in respect to drugs that if the product is shipped only *intra-state*, it is hopeless to expect even the crudest control or inspection in any but one or two jurisdictions. As to interstate shipment, it is sufficient to contrast 65 federal inspectors with a \$350 million annual business in patent medicines alone (110,000 varieties, including so-called "ethical" pharmaceutical products), and with \$20 billion worth of foods and medicines, in normal times, *annually moving in interstate commerce and subject to the Food and Drugs act*; meat inspection which is rather better done (nationally, not locally) utilizes 2,400 inspectors to handle an interstate flow of products running to about *one-tenth as much in value*. The expenditure on meat inspection, per dollar of product "controlled," runs to 30 times as much as that spent on inspection of all other sorts of food and drug products.

The federal administration has admitted that it could easily have utilized in a single year its whole force of inspectors and all its other resources to cope with the situation on either of two products: adulterated butter, and adulterated (and deadly) poisonous extract of Jamaica ginger. Even to *sample* the 375,000 annual interstate butter shipments adequately, would have used three-fourths of the federal appropriation available to cover the whole field of food and drug control. On the ginger "jake" alone, a \$50 million economic loss was estimated to have ensued from terrible crippling and disabling, and in some cases death, of 15,000 or

more persons drinking the poisonous product, while the federal appropriation for all food and drug control amounts to about \$1 million annually. Competent and effective administration, it is estimated, would cost about 70c per capita per annum, i.e., 70 times the present outlay, but still only $\frac{1}{3}$ of 1% of the value of the total product controlled.

Correction of the situation would require, as has been noted, an enormous increase in the money appropriated and in the competence of the staffs employed; it would require new federal legislation, and new legislation in the states and cities, to increase the power of the administration and the legislative mandate on the courts; a policy of pitiless publicity for all firms proceeded against, and for all findings and analyses, whether the results are favorable or unfavorable to firms of power and influence or anyone else; a licensing system prohibiting the manufacturing, packaging, or processing of food or drugs by persons not fully qualified by scientific or technical training, good health, or in other appropriate ways; and limiting such operations in many other ways which space does not permit us to discuss here.

Consumers who are interested in correcting this situation should write to the Chairman of their state Committee of Public Health—or some corresponding committee in their state legislature—and to their congressmen and Senators in Washington, asking that bills be introduced and hearings called to overhaul the whole legislative basis for control of foods, drugs, and cosmetics, nationally and in the forty-eight states. So long as those who are vitally affected by the lax administration of inadequate laws are uninformed on the problem, or make no protest, the present intolerable state of affairs will continue.

F. J. SCHLINK

Businessman's Friend at Court

ANY ORGANIZATION of businessmen (or a single businessman, for that matter) wishing to have a little job of lobbying done, or anxious to apply some commercial pressure to a government department which may not be doing the right thing by the business organization or its product, can now have the services of a new kind of trade association—an association of associations, as it were. A trade association or lobby group of this character, recently established in Washington, not only furnishes lobbying services before “any Government Bureau, Commission, or Committee of Congress,” but will also give “legal opinions on Bills pending and laws enacted affecting your particular industry . . .” and “information will be furnished relative to any Court or Departmental decisions affecting the interests of your organization.” Probably its most important service, however, is its willingness to arrange for “conferences pertaining to any matter pending before any government department.” The result of such conferences will be that “your organization will greatly benefit by the service of being guided and directed to such officials, government

departments or other agencies for which purpose the member may have seen fit to journey to Washington.”

Sex Appeal Dept.

ADVERTISING men apparently still believe that better than campaigns against hoarding, better than share-the-work movements or currency inflation (as an aid to the depressed food industry, at least) is an advertisement showing a movie star “eating an advertised food product.” One of the latest groups to make use of a film star is the spaghetti and macaroni trade.

Joan Blondell, Warner Brothers' beautiful blonde film star, who will be shown in graphic actually eating spaghetti. This is said to be the first time that a movie star or celebrity of Miss Blondell's standing has ever been shown in the process of eating an advertised food product.

In addition, various baseball pitchers, Follies beauties, radio sopranos, etc., “will also be featured in graphic in this campaign.” Thus we find a new reason for suspecting macaroni products of being nutritionally undesirable (and they are). We never did think well of taking counsel on matters of diet from chorus girls, radio singers, or professional athletes.

Rats Eat Garbage, Too!

THIS is an excerpt from one of the latest rat experiments by Mary S. Rose and other Teachers College researchers at Columbia University:

In every one of the 22 rats fed bran as well as the two controls which ate no bran, the tissues were diagnosed as normal, no lesions of any kind being found. *Therefore, it is concluded that bran fed in moderate quantities, such as is usual in human consumption, will not damage the tissues of the normal alimentary tract.* [Italics ours—CR]

This study, *paid for* and widely circulated by the Kellogg Company, makers of bran and breakfast food, will no doubt play an important part in leading human beings (not rats) to believe that bran can be fed to human beings indiscriminately without risk of damage to the alimentary tract, when the reverse is true.

An eminent gastro-enterologist of the Mayo Clinic, Dr. Walter C. Alvarez, says:

The trouble with dietetics is that for the last fifteen years practically all of the research has been done on rats by men who never see patients. . . . The modern dietitian acts as if so far as the deficiency diseases are concerned, her patients were but one jump ahead of the ambulance. (Letter of Dr. Alvarez)

Electric Rate Reduction in Williamstown

IN THE *General Bulletin* for September 1932, Morris Llewellyn Cooke wrote on the problem of buying electricity to advantage. The account of an attempt made by a group of consumers to have their rates lowered, may therefore be of special interest to the readers of the *General Bulletin* of Consumers' Research. This attempt, made by citizens of the town of Williamstown, Massachusetts, proved successful, although local opinion as to the degree of success may vary with the amount the individual consumer has benefited from the reduction.

The initial move came from the local League of Women Voters. The state office of the League prepares material for study groups on various topics of civic interest, and in the autumn of 1930 the groups interested in living costs were studying electrical utilities. For some time there had been a growing dissatisfaction in Williamstown with the excessive charge for electricity. The League members working on study group material decided to make an investigation to ascertain how the local rates compared with those in other towns of similar size and location. At that time the local schedule was as follows: \$.10 per kilowatt hour for the first 300 kwh, and an additional charge of \$.01 per kwh if the bill was not paid in ten days. There was the same rate for all consumers, domestic and commercial. The step-down after a consumption of 300 kwh affected only two consumers in the town, Williams College and Mount Hope Farm. The \$.01 a kwh difference for payment within ten days was called a discount on the bill, but it really meant "penalty" for late payment. Otherwise the rate should have been stated as \$.11 a kwh with a discount of 1 cent for prompt payment. It was later found that the rate for Williamstown filed with the Public Utilities Commission in Boston read: "\$.11 gross, \$.10 net." However, the local company claimed that the rate was only \$.10 per kwh. This matter had been tested by a local businessman, who, claiming that if there were a "discount" on a \$.10 rate for prompt payment, his bill would be correct at \$.09 a kwh, and he made out his check accordingly. The response of the local manager was a threat to remove his meter.

The League study group compiled a questionnaire and sent it to about forty towns. From the answers received it was found that there were only two places in Massachusetts paying a higher rate than Williamstown, and both these places were summer resorts. Further comparisons indicated that the situation ought to be investigated. The group made a report of its findings to the local League. This led to a campaign to make the consumers aware of the facts, and see for themselves whether they were paying a fair rate, or whether they were justified in demanding a reduction. A public meeting was arranged at which the point of view of both the consumer and the company was presented. Mr. Walker, a Boston lawyer, spoke for the consumer and Mr. O'Hara, one of the company's lawyers, spoke for the company. The meeting was well attended. Fortunately it was not seriously affected

by an amusing incident. The lights refused to function, and the whole hall was lit by two small emergency bulbs directly behind the speakers on the platform. The combined efforts of the janitor, the superintendent, the company manager and an employee of the company were of no avail.

The interest aroused by this meeting led to a number of requests for talks by the chairman of the study group, before town organizations such as the Board of Trade. In these talks the results of the investigations were explained. In the meantime the local manager had become aware of the activity and had tried to stave off the evil day he realized was imminent. At first he approached the chairman, with a rather dictatorial manner, and then with more kindly offers of cooperation. He tried very hard to persuade the committee to give up the public meeting. He suggested a substitute meeting of League members before which he would explain some facts about electricity and demonstrate a washing machine. The investigating committee did meet with him, but it was not impressed with his argument that the rates had to be somewhat higher than in other places because the company afforded twenty-four hour service, and because Williamstown was a rural area. He did not fare much better when he presented his case to the Board of Trade. Here he based his argument on two main points: that Williamstown was "rural" (46 square miles), and therefore expensive to wire and maintain; and that the speaker procured by the women to represent the consumer at the public meeting was a Socialist, and that therefore his statement of facts could not be trusted. At this point in his talk to the Board of Trade, the League committee arrived at the meeting in order to present its findings. It was pointed out that although the Town of Williamstown was recorded as "46 square miles," only eight square miles were electrified, and that the statistics presented by Mr. Walker had nothing to do with his political creed, although, as a matter of fact, he was not a Socialist.

The arguments for the existing rate and the promise of a possible cut were so unconvincing that the committee of the League of Women Voters was asked to make a report of its findings to the Town Meeting in February 1931. As a result the town elected a special committee to make further investigation and to act for the town in any negotiations necessary to secure a reduction of rates. An appropriation, amounting to \$1,000 was made, to be put at the disposal of the committee. The committee was made up of the chairman of the town finance committee, the president of the Board of Trade and the four League members who had been conducting the investigation up to that point. An appreciation of the activities of the League of Women Voters was voiced by a local Irish wit who said that as the drones of the Williamstown bee-hive had never "gotten busy" along these lines, he for one was thankful that the queen bees were loose at last.

During this time, the activities in Williamstown concerning electric rates had attracted the attention of the citizens of North Adams, five miles away,

and Adams, some ten miles away. The Adams citizens appealed to the state representative for the district to ask for a hearing before the Public Utilities Commission. He petitioned for such a hearing and thus the law dealing with appropriations was complied with. It is a Massachusetts law that such an appropriation for an investigation cannot be voted by a town until a hearing has been applied for—a legal technicality which may exist in several states, and should be noted by any group undertaking a similar effort. (In Massachusetts the hearing need not be held, but it must be petitioned for.) The representative, however, after a long conference with the company manager, was persuaded that the existing rates were fair, and that there would be reductions made as soon as possible. The hearing was therefore dropped.

As soon as the Williamstown committee was organized, it was approached by the local manager with a request for a conference with himself and the company rate supervisor. The local company had recently become part of the New England Power Association and the claim was made that it was the company's policy to make reductions from time to time, but that in changing hands, this matter had been overlooked. Apparently, the company officials in Boston had become aware of the oversight through rumors of the activities of the consumers in Williamstown. A reduction was to be granted, but whether to confer with this consumers' committee or ignore it seems to have been a matter of differing opinion. Finally the rate supervisor was sent down to talk with the committee to explain the schedule which the company wished to introduce and to get the committee's support for it. He explained a two-type rate which the company wanted to install: a straight rate and an area rate for domestic consumers; and a commercial rate for the business consumers. It was claimed that such an area rate would be advantageous to the consumer living in a five or six room house, and the majority were supposed to be in that class. The committee doubted this assumption and also doubted the benefit of an A, B, and C rate. A survey conducted by the committee showed that the majority would probably not benefit by this scheme. However, the company presented a new rate schedule which was somewhat of a reduction, and although the committee did not support it, it was felt to be only fair to give it a trial. The new schedule was announced in March 1931, and was put into effect in April. It was as follows:

Domestic rate:

Rate A	First 30 kwh at.....	\$.10
	Next 100 kwh at.....	.08
	Excess07

Rate B Room charge:

	\$1.00 for the first five rooms
	.25 for each additional room
	Electricity at \$.05 a kwh

Commercial rate:

Rate C	First 100 kwh at.....	\$.10
	Next 500 kwh at.....	.09
	Excess07

The committee sent out a questionnaire to all consumers to obtain statistics for a comparison of the new rates with the old. From the results it was found that only a small group was realizing any benefit. Those under Rate B in seven and eight room houses noticed an appreciable difference in their bills, but there was no substantial reduction to the majority of consumers. It was felt by the committee that a demand for a further reduction, either direct from the company or from the Public Utilities Commission would have to be based on figures which only a specialist could compile. A consulting engineer of Boston was therefore engaged to present a rate deemed fair to the company and satisfactory to the consumer.

Having been authorized by the Public Utilities Commission to secure the desired information from the company, the consulting engineer drew up a statement of ten months' operation and presented a report to the town committee with a suggested rate which he considered, in the light of his findings, would produce a fair return on investment and secure a considerable reduction to the consumer. On his advice a round table conference was arranged between the company officials and the committee.

As a year had elapsed during which the new rates were being tested and the statistics were being compiled, the committee had had to go before the Town at its annual meeting and ask for a re-appropriation of funds. There was no opposition to this, however, as it was understood that the move made by the company of installing a new rate had delayed the action of the committee in order to give the rate schedule a trial, especially as the rate supervisor claimed that the said rate had already cost the company around \$5,000.

The round table conference took place in April 1932. The company was represented by a vice-president from Boston, the rate supervisor, the district manager, and a new local manager. In addition to their own number and the consulting engineer, the committee had asked two members of the local Board of Trade to be present. The engineer's recommendations had been discussed and approved at a preceding meeting of the committee, and were as follows:

1. A minimum charge of \$.50 to cover service
2. One straight rate for domestic consumers:

First 20 kwh use per month.....	\$.08
Next 30 kwh use per month.....	.06
Next 50 kwh use per month.....	.05
Next 50 kwh use per month.....	.04
Excess03
3. Commercial rate: \$1.00 per month service charge

First 100 kwh use per month.....	\$.08
Next 100 kwh use per month.....	.07
Next 100 kwh use per month.....	.06
Excess05

At the conference, the company presented a series of schedules to the committee, somewhat lower than those put into effect the previous year,

but none complying with the desire of the committee for a single rate and a tangible reduction. As the scale arrived at by the consulting engineer was computed to give 8% return, the committee felt that its requests, if complied with, would not work a hardship to the company. So the members of the committee stood their ground through a discussion which lasted from 4:45 until 10:55 P. M. The company did not want the single rate and they preferred to have a higher rate than to have a service charge and a quicker step-down. Finally they agreed to the domestic rate suggested, with this alteration—\$.75 service charge for which 3 kwh would be given, then \$.08 for the next 17 kwh, \$.06 for the next 30, etc.

The items secured from the company were as follows:

1. A clear statement on the bills of the rate charged
2. Elimination of the penalty feature
3. One single rate for the domestic consumer, one for the commercial
4. A promise of further reductions at varying intervals
5. A substantial reduction in rates

Rate when investigation started,
November 1930

First 300 kwh at \$.10

Rate secured from company, March 1932

Domestic:	Service charge (includes 3 kwh)	\$.75
	Next 17 kwh at	.08
	Next 30 kwh at	.06
	Next 50 kwh at	.05
	Next 50 kwh at	.04
	Excess	.03

Commercial:	Service charge	\$1.00
	100 kwh at	\$.08
	Excess	.07

With this conference the major part of the committee's work was ended, the new rates were announced shortly, and put into effect in June 1932. The committee did not claim that these rates represented what the consumer had a right to expect from an electric utility. But it did claim that the reduction granted was a tangible amount and was as much as could be secured at one time. The consulting engineer seemed to feel that the committee had gained more than the company had come prepared to grant, and this was confirmed by later rumors. On leaving the building, after the long session around the conference table, a company official was overheard to say: "I don't know why these people got anybody down from Boston to help them. They can fight their own battles without outside help." One of the members of the Public Utilities Commission was quoted as saying that if the town had appealed to the Commission the result-

ing rate would probably have been somewhat less favorable than the one secured. Through a League member from another town (a town whose company was also in the New England Power Association) the committee heard that when rates came up for discussion there, a company official from Boston came immediately to talk things over and said: "Tell us what you want, but for —'s sake don't let the League of Women Voters get hold of this!"

The new rates have been criticized because the consumer who uses less than 22 kwh a month pays slightly more than under the old rate, because of the service charge. But the aim of the committee from the beginning was to secure a reduction which was for the benefit of the majority of consumers, and a comparison of the 1930 schedule with that of 1932 shows that in this the committee was successful.

DOROTHEA CHAMBERS BLAISDELL

Help for Businessmen— Not for Consumers

As we pointed out in the January *General Bulletin*, the Bureau of Standards (whose facilities and staff are uniquely suited to the service of the public welfare and were built up at the expense of the general taxpayer) is increasingly limiting its functions to research for business interests rather than for the public at large. Moreover, the research for business interests must be so limited in outlook and so narrow in the possibilities of its utilization that it cannot be applied in ways that will bring about direct savings to ultimate consumers. Direct profits to businessmen are in order; savings for mere citizens as consumers are ruled out. The editor of the *Plumbing and Heating Contractors Trade Journal*, in a recent issue, is quite positive on this point:

A series of articles entitled, 'Care and Repair of the House,' which were written by Vincent B. Phelan of the United States Bureau of Standards in Washington, have been appearing daily during the past month in a number of newspapers throughout the country.

In the opinion of *The Journal*, this is an act on the part of the government which deserves the most severe condemnation by the manufacturers, wholesalers and contractors of the plumbing and heating industry.

The Journal contends that the government is entirely out of place in using the taxpayers' money to tell owners how to make their own repairs and replacements of the sanitary equipment of residences and other buildings. Certainly this is not stimulating business for the plumbing industry.

Rather, it can be termed a vicious scheme to take the 'bread and butter out of the mouths' of the plumbing contractors, the men who have

striven unstintingly for half a century to protect the health of the American people. . . .

Still another reason why our industry should forcefully criticize this activity of the Bureau of Standards is because every time an owner makes his own repairs, *it denies the contractor an opportunity to get into that home or building to discover what other part of the plumbing system may need attention or replacing.* [Italics ours—CR]

This practice is far reaching in its results and letters should be written to the Secretary of Commerce pointing out the great harm that these newspaper stories are causing to an industry which is the 'backbone' of the nation's stability, progress and contentment. [The consumer, of course, is nobody's "backbone," to a businessman's way of thinking.]

The point of view of the trade journal quoted above is typical of the pressures which are shaping the policy, not only of the Bureau of Standards, but of every other government bureau.¹ If consumers expect to obtain either (1) service for which they have paid, or (2) the rights which they are guaranteed under the normal relation of the government to its citizens who pay the salaries of the functionaries in control, it behooves them to be at least as outspoken in their own interests as are the manufacturing and business groups, typified by the editor of the *Plumbing and Heating Contractors Trade Journal*. Expression of consumers' requirements and demands should not be sporadic or half-hearted; they must be effectively organized and put forward upon every appropriate occasion which presents itself.

A convenient reprint from the January 1933 *General Bulletin*, "Has the Bureau Heard from Business?" is available from CR to all who request it, for use in making their protest on this point heard by their congressman and by the governor of their state. Not even your state government is allowed access to the Bureau of Standards data, unless such data are kept confidential and not transmitted in any way to the citizens.

¹The pressure works in two chief ways, first as noted in the above quotation, and second, in the direction of getting special services for manufacturers and merchants from government bureaus, on the sort of work they want to have the government do, for their trade's economic advantage. For example: "mayonnaise manufacturers had a special man assigned to research work in Washington for a long time. The industry paid him a salary. He worked in cooperation with government departments and used Uncle Sam's laboratory and other facilities and equipment, including scientific libraries and collections, frequently conferring with government scientists, and obtaining the advantage of their wide experience and contacts." (*The Drug and Cosmetic Industry*, p. 137, Feb. 1933) One government scientist long in the service puts it: "The Bureau ought not to side with producers as against consumers. . . . The Bureau's moral downfall and subservience to producers is largely due to the Research Associate system and the desire to get money from producers for research associates" [commercial investigators assigned to duty in a government bureau, like the mayonnaise industry's expert just mentioned].

From Cradle—

SOME TIME ago we mentioned the way in which a consumer with a weak vocabulary is penalized in the prices he has to pay—especially when he buys drugs. A table was given of 12 ounces of assorted drugs, the wholesale cost of which was \$31.65 when sold under proprietary names, but only \$11.65 when sold under non-proprietary names. (CR *General Bulletin*, September 1931, 20c)

What might almost be called the end result of the drug trade—i. e., the grave vault business—now furnishes some additional proof of the contention that, "The trade name is a priceless ingredient for which we are willing to pay a fancy price." A grave vault manufacturer has rechristened his solemn enamel-ware, "The Cryptorium." Despite the protest firms manufacturing such items would undoubtedly make, we are prepared to state that each time a new euphemism of this kind is put across, the cost of having one's remains disposed of becomes higher.

A gaudy circular to salesmen of grave vaults, illuminated by a typical sales graph of Price, Quality, and Funeral Director's Profit (which, incidentally, climbs clear off the sheet with the Cryptorium innovation) in commenting upon the happy days that have come to undertakers as a result of a change in funeral terminology, gives a picture of the old and the new:

Undertaker	_____	FUNERAL DIRECTOR
Mortuary	_____	FUNERAL HOME
Coffin	_____	CASKET
Grave Vault	_____	CRYPTORIUM

Before cryptorium advertising began all metal grave vaults were . . . the least expensive that [could] be made . . . and [they] were called 'Grave Vaults,' a term that was as far out of keeping with modern thinking as 'Undertaker,' 'Morgue' and 'Coffin.' The new word 'Cryptorium' immediately took its place beside 'Funeral Director,' 'Funeral Home' and 'Casket.'

Salesmen of Cryptoria are also reminded by the literature that although the handles of the vaults formerly "were of the conventional type with little to distinguish them from those of any other vaults," now "Imperial Hardware" is used, and for the new graveware, an "almost unlimited range of colors [is available] at no advance in price. . . . If you are selling the Cryptorium for \$100 this advertising will make it easier for you to do so in the future because your customers will know that you are not overcharging them." (Don't ask us how they will know this. It's part of the all-pervading magic of trade.)

The consumer is entitled to look with a skeptical eye upon alleged production economies passed on to him by benevolent manufacturers, whether the product be baby clothing or coffins. But not even an undertaker will contend that you get the funeral any

cheaper when the coffin becomes "casket," and he becomes a "mortician."

In addition to using pleasant sounding words to describe the phenomena of getting buried, the more ingenious and enterprising manufacturers are also making use of sex appeal to put grave vaults across. A clipping from *Advertising Age*, for example, shows a very live and ornate blonde siren smiling at an imaginary audience, while the upper arched receptacle of a Springfield Metallic Casket suspended by chains hovers just above her. The object of this scientific experiment was "to demonstrate that the interior of a properly constructed grave vault really is dry." A moment after the picture was taken the

young lady took a dip into a tank of water into which the grave vault was lowered by a hoisting device. The Springfield Metallic Casket Company is very proud of demonstrating a beautiful *live* blonde in a rather melancholy but solidly water-tight grave vault (melancholy despite the red, yellow, or purple baked enamel finishes that are doubtless obtainable). They confess that it "is a striking example of aggressive, convincing merchandising of an article in which it is hard to arouse public interest. Almost 1000 spectators at the opening of the Springfield Company's Philadelphia branch made submarine trips through a tank of water in a stock [grave] vault."

How to Make Good Coffee

THE BEST way to make really good coffee is by the drip method, according to Dr. P. W. Punnett of Columbia University, who recently made for Consumers' Research a comparison of various common methods of coffee making. Dr. Punnett believes that most people do not know the difference between fresh and stale coffee. If coffee drinkers have an opportunity to make a comparison, however, they can usually detect the difference; they will nearly always prefer the fresh roasted and ground coffee when they become used to it.

Coffee is at its best when freshly brewed. The brew deteriorates rapidly on standing. Although there are a few special blends for restaurants which will hold their flavor for one or two hours after the coffee is made, they are ordinarily not available for home use and are not as delicate in flavor as some of the finest table blends. Coffee left over will not have the flavor of freshly made coffee, and left-over grounds should never be used, since they detract notably from the quality of the fresh brew. It is of primary importance, of course, that the coffee itself should be freshly roasted. Connoisseurs will buy beans known to be freshly roasted, and grind their own at the time of making. Others who do not wish to go to this trouble should buy the vacuum packed tins in the smallest sizes available. (There is no way of preventing the freshness from being lost rapidly once the can is opened). Some people believe that emptying the contents of a vacuum packed can into a Mason-type fruit jar and sealing it each time after using helps to retain the freshness, but so far experts have not established that this has any value.

It should be noted in connection with the tests reported, that pots and other devices for making coffee, made wholly of pure sheet aluminum, are usually entirely satisfactory in that they have small or negligible effect on flavor. This is particularly true in the case of coffee-making devices or utensils in which boiling of the liquid does not take place—for example the drip pots or any pot used for steeping. Such effect on flavor as occurs will be more pronounced when the liquid is kept for a relatively long time at a high temperature. (High temperature alone will injure coffee flavor.) There may be an effect on flavor in any coffee-making device

if two or more metals are used in the construction, particularly if one of the metals is iron, copper, or brass. With plated pots, also, there may be an undesirable effect on the flavor through gradual loss of the plating and the exposure of the metal beneath. Enamelled pots are usually satisfactory as long as the coating is intact and no base metal is exposed.

Coffee Making Tests

The following table summarizes the results of the different methods of coffee making:

Method	Extraction Time in minutes	Beverage Strength	Clarity	Rating as to Quality of Flavor
Drip, with filter....	13	110%	Excellent	Excellent
Drip, without paper filter	14	105%	Good	Excellent
Percolator valve-type ...	13	100%	Fair	A slightly "cooked" flavor
valve-type ...	10	82.5%	Fair	A very slightly "cooked" flavor
valve-type ...	17	100%	Fair	Much overcooked
Percolator valveless	13	95%	Fair	Overcooked
valveless	8	87.5%	Fair	Overcooked
valveless	16½	100%	Fair	Badly overcooked
Steeping	10	70%	Fair	Good
Steeping	15	90%	Fair	Good
Boiling (I) ... 19 + 1 + 4		95%	Excellent	Fair, slightly cooked
Boiling (II) ... 23 + 5 + 0		100%	Excellent	Badly overcooked

The following coffee pots were used:

Drip with filter: *Tricolator*, Tricolator Co., 99 Water St., New York City.

Drip without paper filter: *Kwik-Drip*, West Bend Aluminum Co., West Bend, Wis.

Percolator, valve-type: *Supreme*, (No. 392, electric) Sears Roebuck & Co., Chicago.

Percolator, valveless: *Royal*, (stove-top type) Montgomery Ward, Chicago.

Any kind of vessel may be used for steeping, since this process merely involves the pouring of boiling water over the coffee and allowing it to stand where it will keep warm during the extraction time. It is easier to separate the brew from the grounds if the latter are enclosed in a loose cheese cloth bag. Any type of vessel may also be used for the boiling method made by adding cold water to the loose coffee and heating to boiling; then by Method I, boiled for one minute only, allowed to stand for four minutes and filtered off from the grounds; by Method II, boiled for five minutes and then filtered off from the grounds. In either case, to secure clarity it is absolutely necessary to filter coffee from the grounds. In the above test this was done by pouring the coffee through a small piece of absorbent cotton at the bottom of a funnel.

Test Your Own Razor Blades

WHERE can a man find a razor blade that will give a few daily shaves unaccompanied by much painful hair pulling and a smarting or nicked face? After suffering, if not in silence, for these many years he does not ask for much. As yet only a very few men seem to have solved this problem to their entire satisfaction, and we doubt, if present trends in the trade continue, that any satisfactory solution is likely.

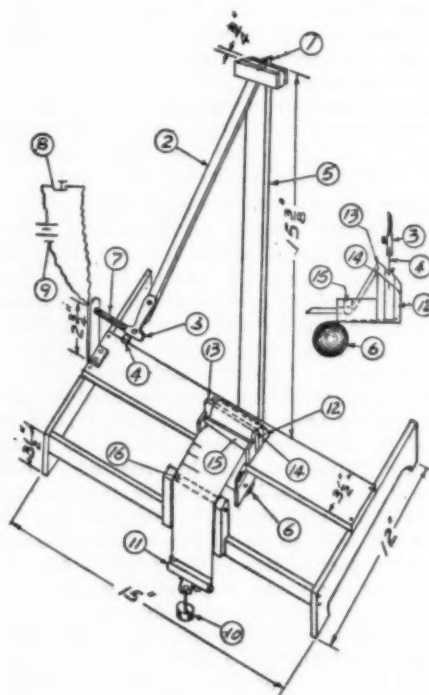
There are literally hundreds of brands of razor blades, particularly of the *Gillette* style, sold throughout the country. Of the less advertised brands few are widely distributed, consequently every city and hamlet seems to be flooded with its own particular and peculiar brands—peculiar in name but not in quality. The quality is generally pretty uniformly low. Razor blades are labeled with anything that will cause the distressed, whiskered male to "try them just once." The sale of a new brand seems to be based primarily on claims for non-essential or non-existent properties—if enough suckers can be induced to buy just one package, its promoter will clean up quickly and get out, or start promoting another brand. Some makers exploit a score of identical "brands" at once. Razor blades, like cosmetics, are likely to be more attractive to the gullible if they show evidences of having been foreign-born. You will, therefore, find many carrying such labels as Sheffield steel, German-made, Swedish steel, etc. Metallurgy also plays its part in creating mysterious properties that serve to tease the imagination of the harassed male until he tries this new brand or goes back to the old because of "great improvements" or because the manufacturer "makes a confession" of his prior incompetence. Such terms as "cobalt steel," "special-analysis steel," "crucible steel," "blue blade," are frequently and effectively used. Of course it does not matter if the customer is quite unable to distinguish cast iron from tungsten steel, or that the "blue" is only a lacquer coating which, in the process of finishing the blade, is completely ground off the edge—the part you shave with.

You will, unless you are unusually well equipped to withstand the onslaught of claims based on mystery and pseudo-science, return time after time to *Gillette*, or *Probak*, or *Gem*, or *Ever-Ready*, only to find them as bad as before, or worse. The Technocrats were correct about one thing at least: good razor blades are *not* being made for general consumption, although good ones have been made and can now be made. Razor blades, like motor cars and clothing, are, as a rule, not perfected to the point where rapid turnover or obsolescence is interfered with, and thus the continuous flow of such goods is not interrupted. If *all* blades are about equally poor in quality, as would seem to be the case at the moment, then sales are kept up at a good pace because nothing better is at hand. Under our present economic system there is no reason why anyone should make blades which are several times as sharp and ten times as lasting as the run of those now on the market, though such improvement is easily possible. In fact such blades have actually

been sold commercially for short periods and then displaced by slightly cheaper blades of far inferior quality.

In view of the large number of brands of razor blades on the market and the wide difference in initial sharpness and durability between brands and even between blades of the same brand, we suggest that consumers with some mechanical ability test their own. Any person with a few tools can make the simple testing device shown in the accompanying diagram.

The essential parts of the apparatus consist of a pendulum supported by knife-edge bearings, to the lower end of which is attached a clamping device for holding the blades, an electromagnetic or simple mechanical trigger-releasing mechanism; and a paper strip supported at such an angle as to be cut by the swinging blade without undue frictional resistance.



The above diagram shows the general arrangement of the parts. A razor blade of the *Gem* type, 1, is fitted into the upper end of the pendulum, 2, and forms the knife-edge bearings which support the pendulum and enable it to swing freely (a frictionless support of this type is very essential). 3 is a razor blade scraping device or holder (sold by Woolworth's) which serves as a clamp for holding the blade, 4, being tested. A soft iron core wound with magnet wire forms the electromagnet 7, which, when the electric circuit is broken by means of key 8, will release the blade and holder from exactly the same height each time.

A roll of best quality adding machine paper 6, $2\frac{3}{4}$ in. in width, is supported under the machine and the paper is threaded *under* and then over the guide 12, over guide 14, under guide 15 to bring it back to a horizontal plane, and finally over roller 16. Attached to the paper is a clip, 11, on which a weight 10 is hung to maintain the paper under uniform tension.¹

The detail drawing of the paper and guides shows more clearly the exact position of the paper being cut. *The angle at which the paper is held relative to the blade is probably the most important consideration in this testing device:* The paper rises from guide 12 to guide 14 at an angle of 45° (a greater but not smaller angle might be used for experimental purposes). This relative position of blade and paper greatly reduces the frictional retardation due to the pressure on the faces of the blade back of the edge as the blade cuts through the paper. Both guides slope down to the right (viewed from the front) in order that a small section of the blade, and not just a single point on the blade, will do the cutting. This angle (from 13 to 14) is determined by a difference in height of $\frac{3}{8}$ in. in the $2\frac{3}{4}$ in. length of the guide, or point 13 is $\frac{3}{8}$ in. higher than point 14. Naturally the slope of both guides 13 and 12 is the same.

The length of pendulum 2 is $13\frac{3}{4}$ in. from the knife-edge support to the end of the blade clamp. The arm is made of a piece of light wood about 1 in. by $\frac{1}{2}$ in. Other overall dimensions are shown on the diagram.

The blade and blade clamp are released by the electromagnet when the circuit is broken by contact key 8. The distance the blade swings is determined by the position of the magnet 7 and should be such as to cause a superior blade of good durability to cut practically through the paper. For testing the double-edge blade (*Gillette* type) the magnet is set in such a position that the pendulum is displaced until the blade is raised 1 in. higher (vertically) than its lowest position—approximately where it begins to cut the paper. For the *Gem* type blade, the pendulum is displaced until the blade is raised only $\frac{1}{2}$ in. higher (vertically) than its lowest position, in order that such blades can not cut deeper than the distance from the edge to the metal back; thus interference of the thicker back part of the blade with the paper is avoided. Successive cuts will give a clear indication of the durability of the blade. Some blades will, after the first two or three cuts, only tear the paper to a depth of about $\frac{1}{8}$ in., while superior blades will continue to give a smooth deep cut after 10 to 15 trials.

This method of testing razor blades is radically different from that used by Dr. K. Honda and reported in *Handbook of Buying*, Vol. VII, Part 1. In the Honda testing machine the blade is made to move back and forth like a bread knife, as it cuts

down through a stack of paper strips. The sharpness of the blade is determined by the number of papers cut through under a given weight applied to the blade and a definite number of strokes. Our own investigation revealed the fact that a blade which was shown to be quite sharp by this method might have a rough or saw-toothed edge with which one would find it quite impossible to get a comfortable shave.

Experimentation with our own machine has shown that it is very difficult to correlate sharpness, as indicated by cutting such a material as paper, with good shaving qualities. The majority of blades are made of such poor material that the edges are instantly broken down by even one contact with paper. Initial sharpness depends to a very large measure upon the time and skill used in finishing the edge after it has been ground down in preparation for honing and stropping. It is quite evident from all the blades that we have tested that the industry takes little or no precaution to see that both edges of the same blade are equally sharp, to say nothing of maintaining uniformity between blades in a single package or between packages.

Some precautions should be noted in interpreting results of tests made with the machine described here. New blades have been tested which would not even cut the paper once but only tore the edge slightly; some of these blades did, however, give a fairly satisfactory shave. Such blades have very little durability, but a person with a light beard may get a few satisfactory shaves. Such persons may consider the blade first-rate (particularly if an effective sharpening device is used regularly); however, to a person with a heavy, stiff beard, the blade may be intolerably bad. On the other hand, a few blades have been found which continue to cut the paper cleanly and deeply, but pull badly when one tries to shave with them. Honing and stropping such a blade with the *Allegro* sharpener usually gave a keen edge with much greater durability than that possessed by most of the widely advertised brands. Some men may find such blades as *Gillette*, *Probak*, *Segal*, *Besteel*, and others satisfactory either because their beards are light and they are satisfied with only two or three shaves from the same blade, or because they are content to use a sharpener regularly and thus increase the life and improve the quality of the edge of the blade somewhat. If manufacturers were interested in producing a first-class shaving instrument instead of merely selling blades, it would be quite possible for them to make blades out of tough, durable steel with uniform, well-finished, initially keen edges that would, when properly cared for, not only shave well the first time, but would continue to shave well for several weeks. Careless handling: dropping, touching edges with towel or to the wash basin, the razor-blade holder, etc., and corrosion, play a large part in blade deterioration. Blades should always be carefully cleaned and dried after using. The often humid atmosphere in a bathroom will cause an unprotected blade of poor finish to corrode in a few hours. Keeping the blade in its original oiled paper wrapper or coating it

¹ An improved arrangement for drawing the paper over the guides between successive cuts was suggested for a similar machine built by a New York department store along the general lines of the design described herein. Two small rubber rollers in close contact (one above the other—similar to a wringer) are placed just in front of the guide 13-14 and the paper is pulled through by turning the rollers. With this arrangement each cut made in the paper can be drawn past the rollers and the tension of the paper at the line of the cut will not be affected by the depth of the preceding cut.

with *Vaseline* after careful drying, will undoubtedly lengthen its life greatly.

D. H. PALMER.

Results of Blade Tests

The following blades were tested for durability with the testing device described above; the tested section was then compared with an unused section by examination under a microscope, and finally the blades were actually used by several individuals in shaving. No blades of the double-edge type were found sufficiently high in quality to be recommended.

Of the double-edge blades (*Gillette* type) those listed as *Intermediate* were found to be quite variable, although occasionally an exceptionally good blade or good edge was found. An occasional very durable blade may be found which fails to give a very good shave on the first use. Such blades, if sharpened with an *Allegro* stropper are often greatly improved and found to outlast other types of blades which were initially quite sharp. No relation between quality and price was indicated in this series of tests.

B. Intermediate

Double-edge blades

Lecoultre (Jaques Lecoultre & Co. Ltd., Sentier, Switzerland) Fits only old-style *Gillette* razor. cr 33

Miracol (Darwins, Ltd.) Fits only old-style *Gillette*. cr 33

Tuxedo (Tuxedo Blade Co., New York City; dist. by F. W. Woolworth Co.) The least expensive blade in this group, and the proportionate number of good blades obtained in a number of packages was as high as for any of the more expensive brands. cr 33

The blades listed below as *Not Recommended* were found to have poor durability and in many cases low initial sharpness.

C. Not Recommended

Double-edge blades

Besteel Blue (dist. by S. H. Kress & Co.) cr 33

Conrad (Conrad Razor Blade Co., Long Island City, N. Y.) cr 33

Darwin (Darwins, Ltd., Sheffield, Eng.) cr 33

Dictator (dist. by S. H. Kress & Co.) cr 33

Gillette Blue (Gillette Safety Razor Co., Boston) cr 33

New Gillette (Gillette Safety Razor Co.) cr 33

Keenoflex (dist. by F. W. Woolworth Co.) cr 33

Lecoultre Twinplex (Twinplex Sales Co., 1627 Locust St., St. Louis, Mo.) cr 33

Moon Extra (Otto Roth, Inc., Newark, N. J.; dist. by S. H. Kress & Co.) cr 33

Probak (Gillette Safety Razor Co.) cr 33

Segal (Segal Lock & Hardware Co., New York City) cr 33

Smooth Shave (dist. by S. S. Kresge Co.) cr 33

Truflex (Gillette Safety Razor Co.) cr 33

Of the *Ever-Ready* style (thick back, single edge, no slot) none was found which had both good durability and high initial sharpness. The listing follows:

C. Not Recommended

Single-edge blades without slot

Ever-Ready (American Safety Razor Corp., Brooklyn, N. Y.) cr 33

Metro (Metro Blade Corp., New York City) cr 33

Sha-Vee-Zee (dist. by F. W. Woolworth Co.) cr 33

Star (Star Safety Razor Corp., Brooklyn, N. Y.) cr 33

No *Gem* style (thick back, single or double edge, with slot) blade was found that could be recommended.

C. Not Recommended

Gem Micromatic Single Edge (Gem Safety Razor Corp., Brooklyn, N. Y.) cr 33

Gem Micromatic Double Edge (Gem Safety Razor Corp.) cr 33

Of special type razor blades, only two warrant recommendation:

A. Recommended

Special type blades

Durham Duplex (Durham Duplex Razor Co., 190 Baldwin Ave., Jersey City, N. J.) One of the most durable. This blade recently greatly improved, gave fair to very good shaves. (A "hoe" type *Durham Duplex* razor is now available for those who do not like the arrangement of the old-style *Durham Duplex*. Razor and one blade sell for 25 cents.)

Sextoblade (Edw. Weck & Co., 206 Broadway, New York City) A durable blade. Gave fair to very good shaves. cr 33

The special type blades listed as *Intermediate* are quite variable, but an occasional one may be found which is sharp and durable:

B. Intermediate

Schick (Magazine Repeating Razor Co., New York City) cr 33

Valet Autostrop (Gillette Safety Razor Co.) cr 33

C. Not Recommended

De Haven (Pilliod Cabinet Co., Swanton, Ohio)

The most expensive blade tested (3 for \$1). cr 33

Enders (Enders Sales Co., New York City) cr 33

Keen Kutter (Simmons Hardware Co., St. Louis, Mo.) cr 33

The tests reported above were carried out by R. Joyce and C. Lack under supervision of D. H. Palmer.

Razor Blade Sharpener

A. Recommended

Allegro (Allegro Co., 170 Thomas St., Newark, N. J.) \$4.85. Excellent, durable mechanical design. *Hones and strops* in about 45 seconds, both movements being mechanically well devised and executed. Be sure to obtain the new model, as the old models are much more inconvenient.

Electric Clocks

THE advantages of electric clocks to most consumers are problematical. Aside from their greater convenience and accurate timekeeping on some few big city circuits, the only arguments in their favor are those of the American sales executive, eager to sell as many mechanical novelties and gadgets as consumers will buy. The net service of the new device may be less and may be provided at higher cost than that of the old-fashioned spring driven clock.

Before buying an electric clock, consider the following facts: (1) In many districts it is not yet possible to use an electric clock because the frequency of the current supply is not "regulated"—that is, constantly adjusted to keep it in step with an accurate pendulum clock. (2) In other districts only direct current (not applicable to electric clocks) is available. (3) Except in central areas of the largest cities, interruptions in the supply of current cause electric clocks to require more personal attention than spring driven clocks. In small city and suburban districts, and even in the outlying areas of a metropolis, short current interruptions are common enough to be troublesome in any device so relied on for constancy as a precision clock. The a-c clock is a precision clock under exceptionally good circuit conditions.

Chronic circuit interruptions come either from low quality or unskilful handling of power house equipment, or poor line construction (particularly where overhead or pole lines are still used). In this connection note that when most electric clocks stop, the length of the interruption is not recorded. The fact that the electric clock has stopped is shown by a red disc, and one has no clue to the probable interval since it ceased to keep time. An ordinary spring or weight driven clock, on the other hand, only very rarely stops if regularly wound, and when it runs, gains or loses at a regular rate or a very slowly changing one, to which one quickly becomes accustomed. (4) The repairing, cleaning, and lubricating of spring or weight driven clocks are reasonably easy to do and are not expensive. With electric clocks the problem is more complex, probably beyond the capacity of the householder himself to do anything with, and the service of a skilled workman may be more costly. In general, with respect to many modern mechanical gadgets, one may, when paying for extra convenience, obtain an unstandardized product with a loss of usefulness or flexibility of application (e.g. electric clocks bought and usable in some areas may not be usable in some other electricity supply areas). (5) The energy-consumption of some of the large sizes of synchronous clocks, such as the *Telechron* type for halls and office buildings, is as high as 4 watts (1/10 kwh per day), or 3 kwh per month (15c to 45c in most districts). The minimum wattage of the most economical clocks of the more common size will probably be about 1/3 of the above figures.

Some electric clocks are self-starting, while others require spinning to put the motor into step (synchronism) with the incoming energy supply.

One type now exists which is not synchronized with the a-c supply, but being spring driven is merely automatically wound; this type runs approximately 24 hours after the power supply has been interrupted.

On the whole it is possible to obtain more precise timekeeping with less trouble and expense from a first-class spring driven or pendulum clock than from any except the best electric clocks used in some of the larger cities with exceptionally well regulated electricity supply. Electric clocks priced at much less than \$2 are certainly a doubtful investment at present. There are all manner of types of electric clocks, and the whole field is in a state very costly and confusing to the purchaser, who does not have the technical training or special background necessary to permit his following the complex trails of bichronous, synchronous, electric-wound, governor-regulated, etc.

Some electrically-wound clocks (details not at hand) may keep very poor time when "off the power," because of deficiencies of the mechanical governor which they use as a timekeeping element.

It is suggested that if an electric clock is to be purchased one take the trouble to find out (preferably from a written or printed statement by the manufacturer) the precise operating characteristics of a clock before buying it: whether it stops at current interruptions, for example, or continues to keep time (within a specified and guaranteed maximum error in seconds per hour). Find out also the maximum number of current interruptions which may be expected in a week or month from the particular current supply on which the clock is to be run. Buy with a written understanding that you get full refund if the stated specifications in all these respects are not borne out in the first month's service.

We do not include any list of *Not Recommended* clocks in this article, on account of the relatively limited technical information so far available. Brief notes on a few *Not Recommended* clocks will appear in an appropriate section of a future *Handbook of Buying*.

The following specific recommendations are based upon information admittedly incomplete, though doubtless far more complete than that available to any but electrical engineers exceptionally well situated to give careful study to the subject. Electric clocks are in CR's opinion not regarded as important enough (economically, that is, and judged on the basis of their value to the average consumer) to warrant expense of test work at the present time. With larger income, CR may later study and report in detail on a few makes of these instruments.

A. Recommended

Telechron (Warren Telechron Co., Ashland, Mass.)

Probably represents best workmanship and design in high-priced class. pt 32

A. Recommended (cont.)

General Electric (General Electric Co., Schenectady, N. Y.) Telechron movement. pt 33

Sessions (Sessions Clock Co., Forestville, Conn.) Telechron movement. pt 33

Sangamo Electric Clock (Sangamo Electric Co., Springfield, Ill.) Sangamo offers also an electrically wound clock for a-c which will continue to run for approximately 24 hours after current stoppage, and an electrically wound clock for d-c circuits. Note, however, that these are not electrically regulated (synchronous), and therefore may keep no better time, even under the best conditions, than any ordinary spring clock of corresponding grade. pt 32

Hammond (Hammond Clock Co., 2900 N. Western Ave., Chicago) Believed to be first class. pt 32

New De Wans Hair Remover Neither Safe Nor Permanent

THE employer of the scientist who discovers a safe and permanent method of removing superfluous hair (if anyone ever does) will undoubtedly reap a fortune. So far no powder, lotion, or cream has been found to accomplish this. This simple and indisputable fact, however, does not deter ignorant or unscrupulous manufacturers and advertising copy writers from making broad claims of safe and easy depilation. Nor are such practices confined to shyster firms.

Saks-Fifth Avenue boasts of being the first to introduce to New York *De Wans* Permanent Hair Remover. Their advertisement in the *New York American* (February 7, 1933) claims that, "After many years of research, this absolutely harmless depilatory has been perfected, and it is now possible to remove superfluous hair permanently with repeated applications of *De Wans*." Shepard's of Providence, R. I. also advertise this new depilatory "find" in the *Providence Evening Bulletin*. Others, among many exploiting it, are three well and favorably known Chicago department stores. When Saks-Fifth Avenue was asked for evidence of the harmlessness of the product, they did the usual thing by passing the buck back to the *De Wan* "Laboratories" who gave their own product a clean bill of health and furnished facsimiles of conveniently worded but misleading certificates of harmlessness from two commercial chemical and chemical engineering (not toxicological) laboratories of Chicago (Illinois Chemical Laboratories, Inc. and Deavitt Laboratories, Inc.) Neither of the laboratories, curiously enough, made any comment on the peculiarly deceptive description of *De Wans* as a "Permanent Hair Remover," though each quoted the phrase in its "certificate." Even the reputable and excellent Rush Medical College of Chicago was given by *De Wans* as one of the institutions which had endorsed its product. Of course Rush Medical College had not in fact provided any such endorsement. The Bureau of Investigation of

the American Medical Association analyzed this new miracle and discovered that it was merely another alkaline sulphide depilatory (strontium sulphide); of such there are a large number on the market at the present time.

As we pointed out in the February *Handbook of Buying* (3.20, 35 cents to subscribers to the confidential service only) there is considerable hazard involved in the use of sulphide depilatories since they may cause serious burns, a rash, or other skin troubles, if they are left on long enough to be effective. They may be easily recognized, when moistened with a little warm water, by a strong, disagreeable smell (under the perfume) resembling rotten eggs. No sulphide depilatory should ever be used on the face. One toxicologist says that the use of strontium sulphide in de-hairing hides and skins in tanneries is probably justifiable, but that tannery workers repeatedly suffer from skin damage from sulphides.

The Bureau of Investigation of the American Medical Association further reports that the *De Wans* preparation was advertised as safe even for use on the eyelids. This is inexcusable; the Bureau points out that a doctor reported very recently the case of a patient who lost the sight of one eye from accidentally getting some of a sulphide depilatory in her eye.

It is wise not to experiment with unknown cosmetics, particularly depilatories. A safety razor is a more effective and safer method of removing superfluous hair than any depilatory yet discovered, or likely to be discovered and commercially exploited. Even if chemists or a medical college are said to have approved the product, you will do well to assume that the endorsements are false, do not exist, or have a trick in them that may be very dangerous to your welfare.

Book Listings

THE REVIEWS of the following books are presented in the form followed in listing other commodities in the confidential *Handbooks of Buying*.

A. Recommended

FAREWELL TO REFORM—Being a History of the Rise, Life and Decay of the Progressive Mind in America, by John Chamberlain. \$3.00. New York City: Liveright, Inc., 1932. An informed study of the character and effects of political and economic reform movements in the past forty years; the rise and decline of muck-raking; the failure of the muck-raker to bring about permanent results because business, through advertising and banking controls, effectively "owned" the newspapers and magazines. It is now too late for "reform"—society must go forward to new configurations and controls. In this well reasoned book the author shows why we can never return to the "good old days" of political liberalism and trust in the doctrine of free competition as a governing mechanism for the economic system.

A. Recommended (cont.)

HOLD YOUR TONGUE, by Morris L. Ernst and Alexander Lindey. \$2.50. New York City: William Morrow & Company, 1932. The authors have put together a swift-moving readable guide through the legal maze of libel actions. The book is not only an explanation of present conditions but a critique of them. Combined with critical discussion of the principles on which libel cases are adjudicated, are the facts of many cases, bringing to life both the principles and the book. *Hold Your Tongue* though presenting serious material amusingly and easily, avoids the fault of seeming to talk down to the layman.

As defined by the authors, defamation is a false publication calculated to hold a person up to scorn and ridicule, to destroy his good name, to bring him into disrepute. Such publication by word of mouth is actionable as slander; when by writing, printing, pictures, etc., as libel.

One section in the chapter on "The Sanctity of the Dollar" is devoted to a discussion of the legal right of such an organization as Consumers' Research to criticize commodities. "The consumer is still kept in virtual ignorance. Newspapers do not find any real news value in interpreting to the consuming public the advertisements run in the daily press. The Bureau of Standards is concealed from the consumer and the Trade Commission may be helpful only if the merchants themselves complain, or if unfair competition is proven. . . ." Those who have wondered why Consumers' Research requires a signed agreement to keep material confidential will be interested in reading Messrs. Ernst and Lindey's very able analysis of the dangers involved in issuing such information as appears in the confidential *Handbooks of Buying*.

In conclusion the authors point out that the law of libel (and statutes designed to control "sedition" and "criminal syndicalism") are basically anti-social in that they put power to throttle dissenting minorities in the hands of the interests dominant at any given time. They present the gravest and most discouraging obstacles in the way of social and economic innovation and improvement.

B. Intermediate

THE WORK, WEALTH AND HAPPINESS OF MANKIND, by H. G. Wells. \$10.00. Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, Doran & Company, 1931. In two volumes Mr. Wells aims to present a picture of man's economic activities from primitive times to the present. Volume I is a survey of man's activities as an economic animal; it is a much better job and more interesting reading than Volume II, in which case studies of unequal distribution of wealth are presented. When it comes to discussing a solution of present economic ills, Mr. Wells cannot forget that he is a prosperous, well-connected author who clings to the pleasant hope that progress will continue "in spite of every human fear and folly," and that through the influence of "education, law, and advancing psychology, and social science" all anti-social tendencies in the rich and powerful will gradually be overcome. The wishful thinking of the well-disposed, comfortable liberal who would like

to see something done to remedy the obvious injustices of the present economic order (provided his privileges and comforts are not interfered with) will be popular with those whose interests are bound up at many points with maintaining the status quo no matter what the peril and pain to the masses of mankind.

C. Not Recommended

RECENT SOCIAL TRENDS IN THE UNITED STATES—

Report of the President's Research Committee on Social Trends. \$10.00. New York City: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1933. The writers of this report are so engrossed with their scholarly paraphernalia that for the most part they are unable to come within reaching distance of the questions they set out to discuss. It is appalling to think of the tremendous machinery of social science research and documentation which were brought to bear on this half-million dollar investigation. One-fifth of the money spent in bringing out this document could have produced a report bristling with interest, challenge, and suggestions for social innovations which are necessary if our present social economic arrangements are to continue even moderately near to their present form.

THE CONSUMER, HIS NATURE AND HIS CHANGING HABITS, by Walter B. Pitkin. \$4. New York City: McGraw-Hill Book Co. 1932. This book has all the outward appearance of a scientific work. It has charts, tables, statistics, case studies in abundance. Sources, however, are for the most part not indicated, nor is there any bibliography.

It is the kind of sociological study that is well within the comprehension of the ordinary advertising man; the material is excellently suited to his use, and is probably as reliable as any he is wont to use or can use to advantage in selling consumers. It is not, however, of any value to the average consumer or student of consumption who needs authentic information not biased in the direction of helping someone to sell somebody something.

Announcement

WE HAVE RECEIVED several complaints from subscribers who received the October *General Bulletin*, Volume 2, No. 1, instead of the January *General Bulletin*, Volume 2, No. 2 mailed on January 5. If there are any who failed to write us about the error, please do so now. We shall be glad to send you a copy of the January *Bulletin* to which you are entitled.

SINCE the *General Bulletin* is issued quarterly, the last issue for the subscription year October, 1932-October, 1933 is due July 5. However, in order that it may reach subscribers before the summer move, so that we will not be put to the expense of changing addresses, we plan to issue it about June 25.

Signs and Portents

IN CASE anyone supposed the aim of business might be to serve consumers well or provide workers with means to secure a livelihood:

The whole business system in the United States is based on the competitive principle, *with adequate profit as the sole goal of those who are engaged in it.* [Italics ours—CR] (*The Confectioners' Journal*, February 1933)

IF THE following concept of the average feminine consumer is commonly held by the men-of-vision, it may explain why most advertisements read as if they were written for unthinking adolescents:

The average woman consumer has the mentality of a 14-year-old child whose education ceased at the sixth grade, says Mrs. [Christine] Frederick, [household editor of the *American Weekly* and for nine years the household editor of the *Ladies Home Journal*] basing her estimate on the aggregate of all women in this country. She is literal-minded, comprehending more than she understands. Her size is 33 or 40; she does not brush her teeth. Her chief occupations are budgeting, buying, broiling and bossing the household. (Alice Hughes' column in the *New York World-Telegram*, October 28, 1932)

THE ANSWER IS: We do not! Try a "Scientist in a Great Eastern University."

As we understand it, an entrance fee of \$2.00 entitles us to join your bureau and that you make a chemical analysis of our products (face creams and lotions) and issue a rating in accordance with your findings.

Are there any other expenses entailed beyond the \$2.00 fee?

We sell through agents, not through the stores. Do you ever furnish signed statements, say 300 in number, for agents to show as an endorsement of a company's products?

We are interested in your bureau and are hoping for a prompt reply. (A letter to CR from a manufacturer of "Aids to Beauty")

THE following confession from a trade journal will help to reassure those readers who think we sometimes overstate the case against advertising and businessmen's "ethics":

Business can never know real, lasting prosperity until it has rid itself of the things which make such an attainment impossible.

Business must quit prating about ethics, and become ethical. (*Oil, Paint and Drug Reporter*, December 26, 1932)

AN ADVERTISING agency gives some advice—and incidentally debunks some claims made for advertising as an educative and ethical factor:

Buy advertising in cold blood, logically, carefully and strictly in accordance with the ability it has to persuade the reader to part with hard-earned money. . . .

From the first, Gile Merchandising Bureau has held to the standard of salesmanship; has built advertising for but one purpose—to sell, and in selling, to bring back to our customers their money's worth—and something more beside. (Pamphlet of Gile Merchandising Bureau, Minneapolis, Minn.)

THE editors of *Purchasing* give their opinion as to the effectiveness of that feeble thorn in industry's side—the anti-trust laws:

'Why don't Americans get together and form rational agreements concerning prices and other matters of common interest?' asks *Collier's* in an editorial, and then proceeds to answer the question. 'The answer is simple and familiar. The Sherman anti-trust law won't let them.'

Now we'll ask one. Why don't bootleggers sell hooch? The answer is simple, in more respects than one. The Volstead act won't let them. (*Purchasing*, December 1932)

AND they've only just found this out:

Until recently the consumer has been taken pretty much for granted. Merchants have cultivated his friendship—but usually on the basis of 'let the buyer beware.' It is hardly surprising that this policy did not foster an enduring sort of friendship. It has in fact created an attitude of suspicion on the part of buyers which many retailers feel is now adversely affecting sales. (*Advertising & Selling*, September 29, 1932)

THIS is no news to CR, but we're glad to find the colleges discovering it too:

Skill in salesmanship may greatly increase demand for products of relatively low value. A college purchasing agents' association tested several brands of varnish, the jury consisting of representatives of the companies whose products were tested, though they did not know which brands were which. The lowest rating went to one of the brands most widely advertised and sold. The representative of the manufacturer unknowingly voted with the rest of the jury in condemning his own product. The public in general cannot make such tests, and must rely on advertisements. (*Antioch Notes*, January 15, 1933, published by Antioch College)

